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WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Torrijos to Discuss Canal Issue With Leaders of Nearby States

The negotiations between Panama and the US for a new canal treaty will be the central theme for General Torrijos when he plays host to the presidents of Colombia, Costa Rica, and Venezuela on Sunday and Monday.

Torrijos will aim for an official declaration by the three presidents supporting Panama's aspirations in the negotiations. As an expression of solidarity, Colombian President Lopez will renounce his country's claim to special rights over the canal, recognized in the Urrutia-Thomson Treaty of 1914 between the US and Colombia.

In return, Panama will promise to grant these rights—primarily the toll-free passage of warships through the canal—to Colombia when a new treaty is signed with the US. Panama will also extend rights to its other neighbor, Costa Rica. President Perez of Venezuela will sign the document to demonstrate support for Panama.

The Panamanian leader is likely to be in an optimistic mood on the canal issue because of the recent transfer to Panama of a parcel of land from the Canal Zone. The Panamanians have long wanted the parcel to expand the city of Colon and its important free trade zone.

Latin American regional solidarity is another topic likely to be included in the presidential declaration. Perez will push his project for the creation of an exclusively Latin American economic organization, which he and Mexican President Echeverria are sponsoring. Torrijos is likely to table Panama's proposals for a structural reform of the



General Torrijos

OAS and may invite it to move its headquarters to Panama.

Torrijos may also try to win backing for Panama's bid for the seat on the UN Security Council that Costa Rica will vacate this year; however, he has failed to persuade Argentina to relinquish its claim, and his guests may be reluctant to deal with the issue.

